

B I G U P Y O U R M I N D

A MUSICAL DRAMA
AND AN EVALUATION

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of the
School of Theology at Claremont

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Religion

by
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This dissertation, written by

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Words and Music
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April 21, 1974

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation involved two closely related creative processes, the writing and production of an original musical drama, and an evaluation of this process. The first part, then, is the text, in full, that was used during the play.

"Big Up Your Mind" is an attempt to portray the development of the early Christian community. It deals with the struggles over whether or not to organize, the style of leadership, the question of personal property, and the problem of relating to non-Jews, which is seen through the filter of racism, today. The central characters were Peter, whose character is documented Biblically, and Ananias, who is only briefly mentioned in Acts 5, and whose character was thus developed mostly in the author's imagination. The intense conflict between Peter and Ananias, and the resultant death of Ananias confront the entire community, and especially Peter, with their own continuing sinfulness, and with the reality of God's love and forgiveness.

The second part of the dissertation is an evaluation of the whole project. The author began by describing why a musical drama is well suited to fill in some of the gaps left by contemporary preaching, theology, and evangelism. He then tried to clearly spell out what he was attempting

to communicate. He was trying to get the audience to experience the history of the church in greater depth, and particularly to get a handle on the conflict within the church about such things as property, circumcision, the military, and leadership. He was also trying to communicate several theological ideas, such as the universality of people's sinfulness, and of their sacredness; and the differences between church-type and sect-type churches.

Finally, after analyzing the contents of the play, there was an overall evaluation of whether the play fulfills its goals, and a listing of some of the drawbacks of a project of this type.

Overall, the dissertation presents a potentially very effective medium for communicating the Gospel, that is well within the scope of the local church.

PART I

BIG UP YOUR MIND

A MUSICAL DRAMA

BIG UP Your Mid

©

Albert L. Wickett
April 21, 1974

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Danny . . . . .	.a teenage boy
Ananias . . . . .	.a former businessperson
Peter . . . . .	.a former fisherman and close friend of Jesus
Clyde . . . . .	.a young man
Nathan . . . . .	.an older man
Prisca . . . . .	.a young woman
Tom . . . . .	.Prisca's husband
John . . . . .	.a fisherman
Duchess . . . . .	.an old woman and close friend of Jesus
Martha . . . . .	.Peter's wife
Ellen . . . . .	.a teenage girl
Ruth . . . . .	.a local drunk
Buzzie . . . . .	.Ruth's cohort
Cornelius . . . . .	.a Roman soldier
Captain . . . . .	.Cornelius' superior
The Community	

(Lines indicated by _____ may be spoken by any member of the Community.)

ACT I SCENE 1

"Growin' Song" sung by the cast from the back of the hall.

GROWIN' SONG

We gotta keep on growin' as days go by.
We gotta keep on searchin' for clear blue sky,
Always new paths to follow,
Always new hills to climb,
We got bad plans to change, new dreams to try.

We gotta keep on learnin' from what we've done,
Each day at dawning steppin' out towards the sun.
Now is the time; begin
Feeling the fire and wind
Calling all God's creation to be one.

I will admit that it's true, Baby,
We've come a long, long way.
We got love, we got laughter and song.
But that kingdom ain't here yet,
No this is the wrong, wrong day.
If you think we've got it made, my friend
You're wrong.....there's a long road ahead.

So wake up, get out of bed, let's plant some new ground
Find some new ways to spread God's love all around.
History's change is slow
New wind will always blow.
Take my hand, take my life, take my joy, take my strife
Fast or slow.....it's on we grow.

The accompaniment continues after the singing stops.
A dancer representing the spirit passes by on the stage giving particular emphasis to a wine bottle in a conspicuous place.

A woman walks through selling apples (yelling loudly).
Four Roman soldiers march by.
A man goes through begging to other passers-by.

Members of the community begin to gather on a hillside. The time is some weeks after the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. Ananias and Danny are the last to walk up the hill. The music builds to a climax, then cuts off sharply, and Danny begins to speak immediately.

DANNY: Watch it, Ananias! You're supposed to take it easy, 'member?

ANANIAS: Hey, give me a break. I'm not a complete Invalid! Is Duchess coming?

DANNY: 'D take more than old age to keep her away. Here, take my hand.

ANANIAS: I can make it, Danny.

They meet the community amid hugs and greetings.

PETER: It...it's good to see you. I wasn't always so sure that...I mean there were times when I thought we might get busted up for good. I'm thankful to God that you--that we--are here.

_____: Yea, after all that's happened...it's good to just feel one another's presence.

_____: To be with those who've been through what we have. It's good to just be here and know why. (All nod.)

CLYDE: I hate to burst any bubbles, but why are we here?

_____: Clyde, how can you ask that?

CLYDE: I'm not knockin' it--I'm just askin' the question. I mean I like being with people I love. But is there something specific we're planning to do? Are we here for a purpose or is this just a class reunion?

_____: Well, of course we are. This is more than just a reunion.

NATHAN: We've got a great future, son. Beyond that narrow dusty road is a sky full of stars.

_____: Right on!

PRISCA: Out there!

_____: What?

PRISCA: Out there, there's a place for us!

_____: (sarcastically) Yeah, Moses!

NATHAN: Yeah, but we're not just any group of people.
With a little elbowgrease...with a little sacrifice
...we could become a...we could be....

_____: We could what?

NATHAN: We could become more than what we are.

CLYDE: (Stands) But what the hell are we?...We're
just a bunch of people who had one freaky friend in
common. (sits)

SILENCE.....

JOHN: So what happens now?

DUCHESS: I'm really confused, John. There's so much
happening inside me, yet nothing is coming out.
Nothing...not since he died.

MARTHA: I feel like Duchess does. My head is a tangled
fishnet. I don't know what's going to happen.
(Others nod agreement. Then more silence.)

_____: I miss him. I mean I'm really lonely for him.

_____: Yeah, so do I...three years we spent...three
long years. We ate together and walked together
and slept and prayed and laughed together.

_____: We washed out clothes together and cleaned the
dirt off our faces and cooked and cleaned up
together.

_____: Remember the songs we used to sing together?

_____: Remember the stories he used to tell?

_____: Remember that soup he cooked one night?

_____: Bleeah! His story tellin' was sure better than
his cookin'.

CLYDE: That's not sayin' much. (Laughter)

_____: Remember the day he threw Martha in the lake...

MARTHA: And then he couldn't keep from fallin' in him-
self.

_____: And the jokes we told together.

_____: And occasionally we had a little too much wine together.

_____: And just when we had a good thing going, he has to take off.

PETER: (After a pause.) That's it. That's what I've been feeling. I'm angry at him. We were all suckers. We left everything we had to go gallivanting all over the countryside following some schizophrenic preacher talking about love and justice. I mean we put up with poor wages, lousy food, rocks to sleep on. We walked through deserts, sat on cactus, we had cut hands and sunburned backs and calloused palms. We got sick and hungry and tired and cold and just about died at times. (The community murmurs agreement.) And finally... finally when we were about to get something together, he goes on a self-defeating, masochistic, anti-temple binge which I knew, yes I told him it would get him knocked off one way or another. But no! He's got to go play martyr while we, the people who loved him most, we get stranded. (pause) It's just that we had so much potential and now there's nothing left but sticks and stones.

DUCHESS: There you go! Shooting off your fat mouth again. (She walks over and takes Peter's hand.) Peter, you know that we've got more than that. We've got us. The community of unique people---each sacred---gathered here now.

ANANIAS: Besides, sticks and stones are the tools with which great kingdoms are built. (More silence.)

DUCHESS: So what happens now?

ANANIAS: We need to get organized.

PETER: I think we need to wait--to wait for a positive sense of direction that we all feel.

ANANIAS: Shall we wait till hell freezes over and then get together? We've got three years of Jesus' life and ministry. What more direction do we need? The Romans and Pharisees are already getting organized while we get disorganized.

PETER: Ananias, the authorities have given us no trouble of late.

ANANIAS. No trouble! They crucified our leader.

DUCHESS: I don't know what we need. I just don't like feeling like this...disjointed--separated--everybody going in a different direction.

MARTHA: I'm just afraid we'll lose something that we don't even know we have.

NATHAN: If there were something to hold us together. Something to represent the experience that we have shared. Something to symbolize who we are and where we are going.

_____: A symbol! Something tangible we can really relate to. (They murmur agreement.)

_____: How about a sunrise? Signifying the coming of the Kingdom?

_____: I like it.

ANANIAS: Nah, it's too abstract. You can't really reach out and touch a sunrise.

_____: A circle?.....expresses unity.

_____: Or a wheel.

_____: We still need something more specific. I suggest an ox....symbolic of strength and humility.

CLYDE: Humility? Not the oxes that I've known.

_____: How about a nail?

ANANIAS: Maybe a crown?

NATHAN: I like that---symbolizing the coming kingdom of God.

_____: Expressive of the strength of the almighty.

_____: I could go for that. (The community murmurs agreement.)

ANANIAS: Then we agree? A crown it is. Who will make us one?

ELLEN: I'll do it.

DANNY: I'll help.

ANANIAS: (While he talks, Prisca goes over to talk to Tom. Then she walks over to a sack at the side, pulls out a crown and carries it over to Ananias.) Then it's settled. Ellen and Danny will make us a crown. There remains one thing to decide: when will we get together again? Perhaps the best time would be(sees the crown).....what's this?

PRISCA: It belonged to my grandfather. We were hungry and had no money.

TOM: We were going to sell it at the market today.

ANANIAS: You're giving it to the community?

PRISCA: Yes, take it. (Ananias hangs it on a tree.)

DUCHESS: But how will you live?

TOM: We'll do all right, don't worry.

CLYDE: (Gives his coat to Prisca.) Here, this should bring in something at the market.....no, take it. I have another.

(This is followed by a few similar gifts among the community.)

MARTHA: You've given much to us.

PETER: I'm grateful to you and to God for making you a part of us.

ANANIAS: We are all grateful. And now before we break up we need to decide when and where we'll be together again.

DUCHESS: My house is always available. It's not too big but it's cozy---and safer.

ELLEN: Sounds good to me. How about in two weeks for dinner?

ANANIAS: Then it's settled. Two weeks from now at Duchess' place and we'll all share the food we bring.

PETER: Before we all run off let's share our joy for the love that exists between us.

(They sing the Benediction Song.)

BENEDICTION SONG

God be with you as you go away
God be with you as you live each day.
God be with you as the sunset fades to night,
Stand along with you to breathe the morning light,
Though good days and bad pass you by
If God be with you so am I.

God be with you in the life you live
Teacher, carpenter, executive,
God works with you as you toil beneath the sun
Tired together you can smile when the work is done.
Whatever the task you may try
If God be with you so am I.

(Chorus:)
Take my hand; don't ask why.
Now you stand; soon you take to the sky,
Know that God goes with you friend wherever you may fly
And if God be with you, so am I.

God be with you in your sufferings
Soothe the creeping pain that hunger brings.
Though the misery of sickness bites your soul
Strength surrounds you that can keep your spirit whole,
But if God be with you so am I.

(Repeat verse 1 and chorus.)
(At the close of the song they bow their heads.)

PETER: Be with us, God, as we struggle for eternal
life. We don't really know what you want of us.
We don't even know if we can do it when we find out.
What we do know is that without your guidance we're
a bunch of useless hypocrites going nowhere. Be
with us when problems seem to.....

Cornelius and the Captain enter.

CAPTAIN: What's going on here?

MARTHA: Nothing, Sir, we're just friends getting
together.

CAPTAIN: Do "friends getting together" always nail
crowns on trees?

ANANIAS: We mean no harm. It's just a symbol of our
religion.

CORNELIUS: But aren't you Jews?

DUCHESS: We are.

CORNELIUS: Your symbols are well known. Why do you need a new one?

PETER: We celebrate a new dimension of our faith--the lordship of Jesus, the Christ.

CAPTAIN: I've got bad news for you--your leader's dead.

PETER: And I've got good news for you--our leader's alive.

CAPTAIN: (after a pause) Cornelius, destroy that crown.

CORNELIUS: What purpose would that serve?

CAPTAIN: Do it, man--now.

CORNELIUS: But they've broken no law. By what authority would.....

CAPTAIN: Cornelius, I'm in command here. I order you to destroy that crown. (Cornelius destroys the crown and brings it to the Captain. The Captain walks slowly over to Peter.) Now listen, Jew! (Gives him the broken crown.) There is no crown but that of Caesar. If you want to stay in one piece, I suggest you remember it. (The Captain and Cornelius leave.)

ANANIAS: (After some silence) How much evidence do we need? If we don't organize we'll be giving them a license to walk over us at will.

_____: He's right. At the meeting at Duchess' house we need to make plans.

(They murmur agreement and look at Peter who grumbles consent. They all exit with "God be with you's" and leave Danny and Peter.)

DANNY: May I take this? I may be able to make something of it.

PETER: (Gives him the bent crown) Of this? Fat chance. (Danny starts to run off the stage) God be with you, Danny.

DANNY: And with you, Peter. (Pauses to speak, then runs off.)

Peter walks over to one side, picks up a fishing pole and goes over to a special spot on the other side and starts to fish. After a while Martha comes over and sits down a short distance from him.

MARTHA: What's wrong, Peter?

PETER: Huh? Everything's fine, Martha.

MARTHA: How long have we known each other?

PETER: Oh, since we were about grass high to a knee-hopper.

MARTHA: You say everything's fine. Silly husband, I know you better than that. When you come here fishing...there's something on your mind.

PETER: It's all so hazy. I'm not...I mean I can't... I don't know what to do.

MARTHA: Things have changed fast in the past three years.

PETER: Back then I hadn't been fifty miles from where I was born. I was just a cocky, young fish bum that smelled like sardines.

MARTHA: Well, at least that much hasn't changed. (They laugh and then get quiet.)

PETER: Were you angry with me?

MARTHA: How is that?

PETER: I just split--a month after the wedding--didn't even tell you where I'd be.

MARTHA: Silly question. I wasn't angry with you...I was furious. I wanted to tear your hair out.

PETER: You still angry?

MARTHA: When we got married I was really crazy about you. It takes more than one incident to blot out all those feelings. When I saw the community and heard Jesus talk I began to understand what got into you. Sure I was mad, but I never stopped

loving you. And now, if anything I love you more...
Tell me something, what do you want now?

PETER: I don't want to go start a church. I don't
even know what one is.

MARTHA: But what do you want?

PETER: Huh?

MARTHA: Right now, what do you want right now?

PETER: I want...I'd like to raise a family, get a
little place on the sea of Galilee...

MARTHA: Is that wrong?

PETER: Wrong? Hell, no. I'd like to get some line and
poles and pick up a cheap sloop on special, and
spend the rest of our days together--jes, just you
and me, off somewhere doin' nothin' but fishin'!

(Musical intro begins)

MARTHA: Fishing?

PETER: Fishing all day long!

FISHIN' ALL THE TIME

You get a pole; I'll get a net
Sinkers and hook and line,
We're gonna make ourselves a happy life together goin'
Fishin' all the time.
You bait a hook; I'll read a book
Livin' could be so fine
Without a trouble in the world to keep us from our happy
Fishing all the time.

We'll build a house; cottage for two
Parsley and sage and thyme,
We'll get a ricky ticky old and cheapy boat and we'll go
Fishin' all the time.
Two easy chairs; feet on the rail,
Sippin' a glass of wine.
An' all the fish are gonna want to be included when we're
Fishin' all the time.

We're gonna wave to our friends as by we float.
They're gonna shout "hey, hey! Look at them row that boat

A merrily, merrily down the stream."
'Cause I've got a lot of lovin' for you
You got a lot that's mine.
And every day will be a happy new adventure when we're
Fishin' all the time.

You be my captain, I'll be your old first mate.
And hand in hand, "Hey, hey" Together we'll row that crate
A merrily, merrily down the stream.
'Cause I've got a lot of lovin' for you,
You got a lot that's mine
And every day will be a happy new adventure when we're
Fishin' all the time!

ACT I SCENE 2

A lighted sign goes on.
Ruth and Buzzie's theme is played, Cornelius enters and stands at stage, lower left, looking away from the stage. Ruth and Buzzie stagger in and eventually run into Cornelius--giving him a solid bump in the process.

RUTH: Hello, there.

CORNELIUS: Hi, friend.

RUTH: Nith night tonight.

CORNELIUS: Havin' a good time?

RUTH: Ain't that a fact?

CORNELIUS: Say, have you seen Peter of Galilee?

BUZZIE: Hey, cheeze it, man! There'z Roman soldiers all over this place. (He motions for the Soldier to stay put while he and Ruth look around for soldiers.) You want Peter of Galilee?

CORNELIUS: That's right.

BUZZIE: (whisper) He was down on the south side.

CORNELIUS: OK, thanks. (He leaves.)

RUTH: (as they walk off) Hey, who was that masked man?

The music filters in again. The spirit dancer dances, leaves, as the community begins to change the scene to Duchess' house. One by one the people gather.

ACT I SCENE 3

The scene is Duchess' house. On the table is bread and wine, as well as modest signs of a feast, like fruit and rice. Some people are there, some are entering. People are greeting one another with hugs and handshakes and making general crowd noises.

DUCHESS: Hey people! Hey! (talking continues, she stands on a chair.) Hey quiet! (They get quiet.) This is the orneriest bunch I've seen in a long time. (Laughs) We've come here together to... oh, no, John, you can't eat until I'm done talkin'. (Laughs)...an' if I get goin' I might go on all night. (more laughter) We've come here to share and renew the love we have for each other. We do this in the memory of Jesus--who showed us how to love. We're also here to organize our faith and that's a helluva scary proposition. We hope to lead our fellow Jews to recognizing the new dimension of the faith we share. Frankly, I don't know if we can do it. Certainly, without God's help... there's no way. Danny, where's that thingamabob you made? (Danny brings in the fish.)

_____: What is it?

_____: Looks like a fish?

_____: It is a fish.

DUCHESS: It's made from the smashed crown. Seems more appropriate to me. That crown symbolized the wrong kind of kingdom.

_____: But why a fish?

DANNY: Partially because a smashed crown sort of looks like a fish. Partially...remember the words of Ezekiel? He talks about a river of clean water flowing towards the Dead Sea. (Reads from a Scroll: Ezekiel 47:8b-10)... "and when it enters the stagnant waters of the sea, the water will become fresh. And wherever the river goes every living creature which swarms will live, and there will be very many fish. Fishers will stand beside the sea; from Engedi to Eneglaim it will be a place for the spreading of nets; its fish will be of very many kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea."

_____: Live fish swimmin' in the Dead Sea--ain't that a trip!

CLYDE: Seems about as likely as Caesar givin' us a tax refund.

PETER: Seems impossible, Clyde, but that's the hope of this community. Ezekiel saw fish thriving in what was a poisonous sea. Perhaps one day we shall see free human beings living in what was a poisonous world.

DUCHESS: That's the day we all pray for.

JOHN: Hey, let's eat.

DUCHESS: O.K., John. Peter, will you dedicate the meal for us?

(Peter sings "Communion Song")

COMMUNION SONG

This loaf of bread is like my body,
It's like my flesh, it's like my hand.
This loaf of bread, it can be broken,
Torn into pieces by woman or man.
This congregation is like my body,
It's like this bread, like flesh and bone,
It can be broken, torn into fragments,
ripped into pieces, each lost and alone.

This cup of wine is like the spirit,
It's like his blood, it's like the soul.
For though the bread can always be broken
Each drop of wine will always be whole.
This congregation partakes of that spirit
Drinks of this wine, breathes of that soul
Though we're at odds, though we're divided
The spirit among us will always be whole.

The community joins in the singing the second time (in 4/4 time) and eats while they sing. When finished they begin to sit back and relax.

_____: That was good.

JOHN: I'd say it's time for a nap.

_____: Move over, John--make room for me.

_____: I'm gonna take a walk.

ANANIAS: Hey wait a minute! Let's not forget why we came here. It's time to start thinking. We've got to begin to get organized.

_____: How do we do that?

_____: Hell if I know.

_____: What a drag.

DUCHESS: O come on. This is serious business!

JOHN: I still say it's time for a nap.

ANANIAS: It's obvious that someone's got to take a greater share of the responsibility.

_____: Yea, that's true, we need a strong leader.

_____: Someone to point out where we're off the mark.

_____: And just to keep track of details.

_____: Yea, someone to keep John from falling asleep.
(They laugh.)

PETER: I don't agree. I think there's danger in putting too much responsibility in the hands of a few people.

_____: I don't get it, Peter. What's the danger?

DUCHESS: Well, sometimes people with a lot of power get ...sort of...they're not still with the people they're leading.

_____: Some of the pharisees are like that.

CLYDE: Some of them?

PETER: The other reason is that it might make it easy for us non-leaders to cop out.

_____: How's that?

_____: Like letting the leaders do the ministry and letting us off the hook.

ANANIAS: Do you really think these people have that kind of an attitude?

PETER: I'm just raising the...

ANANIAS: Now look. Administration is what I did for a living until last year when I joined up with this crew. If you don't have adequate leadership you've got lots of people running in circles getting nothing done fast. Look at the world around us. Who's making the real impact--the organized groups or the leaderless ones? Look at the massive problems we've got to deal with. Hunger, Roman oppression, slavery, sickness, the world seems like it's ready to explode. A leaderless church is not going to make much difference.

PETER: So what you want to do is institutionalize the community. Open up your eyes, man. Don't we have enough institutions already? Jesus taught us to deal with people as people. The bureaucracies--that's what makes people into slaves. Do you think that you're going to counter all the evil structures in this world by building another structure? No, Jesus taught us that we can't do a thing until we begin to change the hearts of people.

ANANIAS: How much have we accomplished by sitting around doing nothing? Maybe John's right. If we can't get our act together we may as well just take a nap. (silence)

MARTHA: We've got a problem here. How do we get organized to help a sick world--without getting sicker ourselves?

_____: Or is it possible to build an institution that centers on love rather than other kinds of power?

DUCHESS: Maybe...maybe the answer lies in giving; maybe there's a power based on something other than the things you own.

CLYDE: You mean like who you know.

DUCHESS: No. That's not what I mean.

_____: Maybe we got strength we aren't using.

_____: Maybe we've picked up a power that can make us...

CLYDE: Oh come on people. There's a cruel world out there and the only thing that matters is who's dealing the cards. And right now the dealer is Caesar.

DUCHESS: But you got a choice, Clyde. You can choose not to play the game.

_____: If we don't play the game, Caesar's got no power at all.

CLYDE: But you can't do that. You just can't.

_____: Jesus did.

CLYDE: Well this man ain't Jesus.

_____: (pause) I don't know, Clyde. Maybe you are.

DUCHESS: (After a few moments of silence.) The crown-- I mean the fish. Part of the answer has already been shown to us by Prisca and Tom. It's in giving that we find power. That which belongs to us belongs to the community. That makes us freer of the world because we've got less stuff to mess with. And the community has something to work with towards bringing about some kindness in the world.

_____: I don't get it. Are you saying we should throw our stuff away?

DUCHESS: No, I'm just saying that this community can make better use of them together than we can individually.

PETER: Surely you're not saying we have the money to make any kind of dent in the world's problems.

ANANIAS: No, Peter, not money-wise. But we can help ourselves and we can set an example--that's where the world may be changed. I've been thinkin' about this concept. I think it's a necessary first step.

_____: (brings a robe to Ananias) Ananias, here's my robe (fancy and seen on stage before). It should bring fifteen denarii at the market.

_____: (Young child brings a slingshot.) This is to the community to help in the world.

MARTHA: (Picks up the child and hugs it.) Thank you--
it's a good thing what you have done.

ANANIAS: Wait a minute. We need a treasurer here. How
about Ellen?

MARTHA: I don't know. Do you think the community could
use these baskets?

ELLEN: We used 'em tonight didn't we?

JOHN: I've got an old dinghy that I never use any
more. I'm going to sell that for about 60 denarii
which I pledge to the community. (cheers)

ANANIAS: You getting this, Ellen? (She nods.)

_____: We've got a little patch or land outside of
town. I bet we could sell it for 150 denarii.
Whatever the price the whole thing goes to you--or
us. (cheers)

_____: O.K.

_____: I've got a better idea. Why don't we make it a
community farm. We could take turns working it and
share the products.

_____: That's a great idea.

ANANIAS: Good thinking. Since it's your idea--do you
want to organize it?

_____: O.K.

_____: I'm going to sell my extra table, it's worth 20
denarii.

_____: If this keeps up one day we'll have enough money
to build a building, a place to meet.

PETER: If we want one.

ANANIAS: We do want one. That day may be sooner than you
think.

_____: What do you mean?

ANANIAS: Well I may as well tell you now. My brothers
and sisters in Christ. I waited to tell you this
but, here goes. You know of the land I own in the

valley. Well I have done a lot of thinking recently about what Jesus said to the rich guy, and all that stuff about camels going through needles. It's sort of scared me because, as you know, I am a rich man. Well, being wealthy sometimes isn't all it's supposed to be. So I thought I might...well ...I decided to sell the land in the valley and the entire value goes to the community. (They react in silent amazement.) I'm meeting a guy in just a few minutes to finalize the deal. Well I just want to say that this community idea really has me caught and I hope this will give us something to work with. (Sits down.)

_____: (After some silence.) That's great, Ananias...
I mean I don't know what to say.

(Some respond by hugging or other non-verbal things suggestive of saluting a king.)

_____: (pause) How much are you selling it for?

ANANIAS: (quietly) Huh? It's...uh...te...uh...5,000 denarii.

_____: What? What'd he say?

ANANIAS: (loud) Five thousand. I said 5,000 denarii!

PETER: And you're giving the entire 5,000 to us!
(After more quiet amazement.) It's a courageous, selfless sacrifice you've made. We are all deeply grateful.

ANANIAS: I...I've got to go now. I have a meeting to close up this deal.

(He leaves showing that he's troubled. Others say 'God be with you,' etc. as he goes.)

_____: How do you follow an act like that?

_____: How do you stand next to a man like that?

_____: He's strong.

_____: So giving.

_____: We can be grateful to God for...for not leaving us alone in the wilderness.

(Danny picks up Ananias' cape and hat and marches to the walking music, then leads in "I WISH THAT I COULD BE LIKE ANANIAS".)

I WISH THAT I COULD BE LIKE ANANIAS

Oh...I wish that I could be like Ananias
I wish that I could do the things he can.
When I see myself, the works I do
The way I feel, the things I blew
I wish that I could be like Ananias.

I'd like to learn to make my life so pious,
If only his devotion could be mine,
When I see him pray so righteously
The strength of his convictions make me
Wish that I could be like Ananias.

He's such a great Christian Brother
A man like no nother
A house built on rock, he's the head of the flock
With his head high above us
to lead and to love us
His virtue and integrity
Make fools of little folks like me.

I wish that I could be like Ananias
I'd like to make my lifestyle like his own
I wish that I could walk like him
and think like him and talk like him
I wish that I could be like Ananias.

(Repeat all but the last three lines, then add these)
But when I try, I can't get free
My ego gets the best of me
I wish that I could, hope that I could
Know that I could fly
I wish that I could be like Ananias.

The crowd is laughing and talking and slowly fades out,
the lights dim on the crowd and raise on the gate outside
the house. There, Cornelius is impatiently waiting.

ANANIAS: Cornelius.

CORNELIUS: I'm here. It's about time.

ANANIAS: (Just coming through the door.) You know how
meetings are.

CORNELIUS: Let me see the deed...Yes...It looks O.K. (He starts dealing out packs of money.) All right, here's 1,000, 2,000, 3,000, 4,000, 5,000...(he makes one pile) 6-7-8-9-10,000...(makes another pile and hands them both to Ananias). Ten thousand denarii----that's the lot.

ANANIAS: (starts looking it over)

CORNELIUS: So what are you going to do: Retire early? See the world?

ANANIAS: No. (still looking)

CORNELIUS: Get a big house--you'd even have enough left over for three or four slaves.

ANANIAS: That's not what I want.

CORNELIUS: Invest it--create yourself a small kingdom? That's it, isn't it?

ANANIAS: A kingdom? In a way.

CORNELIUS: How so?

ANANIAS: I'm giving the money to the community.

CORNELIUS: You mean those religious nuts you were with last month?

ANANIAS: They're the ones.

CORNELIUS: And you're giving the money to them?

ANANIAS: Yep.

CORNELIUS: All of it?

ANANIAS: Look, I'm not feeling too good right now. Maybe I'll see you tomorrow.

CORNELIUS: O.K. Buddy, it's your money.

Ananias leaves. Cornelius is left thinking. The crowd noises gradually rise. Cornelius hears the noise and walks toward the room. As he enters they all get quiet.

DUCHESS: Welcome to my house. How may I help you?

CORNELIUS: I heard noises. What is this meeting?

DUCHESS: You've seen us before.

CORNELIUS: You're the ones who conned Ananias into giving you his money.

_____: No, he's giving it freely.

CLYDE: The money goes to help replace the kingdom of Caesar with the kingdom of God.

CORNELIUS: You people never give up. Don't you know I could have you in jail for saying that?

DUCHESS: (Looks him in the eye.) I feel no fear of you.

CORNELIUS: I don't understand you people. You show no respect for the authorities, yet you have no power on your own. Your leader is killed yet you keep on playing the game like he was still here. You sell your possessions and give to a group that knows nothing of finances. If your group fails, which it's guaranteed to do, the money is lost. Even if your group gets popular it'll just be crushed by Rome. You can only bring yourselves poverty, misery, loneliness. Why in God's name do you stay together?

PETER: (Pause) You say we have no power. Really, we're trying to find power of a type that's hard to recognize.

_____: Sometimes I can't recognize it myself. But I know it's there.

_____: Our power doesn't get shown off with swords and uniforms.

_____: It came to me quietly, from within.

CORNELIUS: What are you talking about?

_____: Giving, sharing, loving; it's power that does most of its work invisibly. The only part you can ever see is the outermost fringes.

DUCHESS: Cornelius, you may be right. We may struggle with the world for one week and die. But something inside of us calls us to try.

MARTHA: We don't know how to organize. We don't even know what the "kingdom of God" really is. But we've got to find out if love power really can work.

PETER: You say this can only bring us poverty? But tell me---how rich are you?

CORNELIUS: I've got a bundle

DUCHESS: You've got lots of property. But how rich are you?

CORNELIUS: (pause) I've got to go. (He turns to leave.)

ELLEN: Will you turn us in? (He leaves after looking at her.)

DUCHESS: No, Ellen, he won't turn us in.

_____: I guess we better go.

They sing the Benediction Song, Verse 3, Verse 1, and the Chorus. Cornelius in exiting, hears the singing. He stops--listens for a long time, then turns and briskly walks off.

ACT I SCENE 4

The scene is the front of the stage. The drunks' theme music is played and they come out as before. They run into Cornelius.

CORNELIUS: Howdy, friend.

RUTH: Oh, ith you again. Howz it with you?

CORNELIUS: Not bad...not bad. How are you?

RUTH: Not thso bad...How are you?

CORNELIUS: Is this a broken record?

BUZZIE: Common now. They won't be invented for another thistien sousand years.

CORNELIUS: Hey, you helped me before, maybe you can do it again.

RUTH: O.K. thththsoot! (In the soldier's face)

CORLENIUS: (Mops his face with a handkerchief.) Is Peter of Galilee the leader of that new Jewish sect?

RUTH: Shhhhh...Jussaminute. We gotta check for soldiers. (They check.) Now what was the question?

CORNELIUS: The new Jewish sect. You know about it?

RUTH: No, I thought they just had men and women.

CORNELIUS: I mean the religious sect.

RUTH: Oh that one.

CORNELIUS: Is Peter the leader?

RUTH: Is Peter the leader?...Hmm...I dunnow. What do you think?

CORNELIUS: I dunnow. What do you think?

RUTH: I dunnow. What do you think? (To Buzzie)

BUZZIE: I dunnow. What do you think? (To the blank space beside him.)

RUTH: My god, it is a broken record.

CORNELIUS: Come on, answer the question.

BUZZIE: Do you wanna know what I think?

CORNELIUS: I'm dyin' to know what you think.

BUZZIE: It is my considered opinion that I think that Peter doesn't have the infestinal torpitude...to lead a quilting bee.

RUTH: (as Ruth and Buzzie walk off to the left) Now wait a minute. What is so simple about a quilting bee?

BUZZIE: Ith just that they're not gonna invent those things for another thsistien sousand years.....

The soldier exits in the other direction.

During the scene change the spirit theme is played and the spirit dancer dances, again bringing attention to the wine bottle.

ACT I SCENE 5

The scene is outside. Danny, John, Nathan and Clyde are center stage, mending their fish nets.

NATHAN: But then there's another way of looking at it. It's not so much that he's doing the wrong thing, it's that he's not doing anything at all.

CLYDE: I mean how long does he expect us to tread water?

JOHN: But you know...when Peter found out about Ananias' plans for the new building...boy, was he sore!

DANNY: But he had a right to be mad. Ananias should have called him in on it, even if he knew he wouldn't help. You don't just build a new building like you're movin' a privy. I'd have been mad, too.

NATHAN: Yeah, but not that mad.

JOHN: Peter was boilin'. He was ready to explode.

CLYDE: I mean he was angry. He was flushed whiter than a Roman in winter.

JOHN: Speaking of Romans, what do you think of that Cornelius dude?

DANNY: Not bad for a gringo.

NATHAN: But he's one of them...don't you forget it.

JOHN: And who is "them"?

CLYDE: The Romans, the oppressors, the guys that keep shovin' your nose in the hog wallow.

JOHN: Do you see any hope for them, Clyde?

CLYDE: I don't know...Maybe. (Cornelius enters, walks over to the group.)

CORNELIUS: Hi, guys.

OTHERS: Hello, howdy, etc.

CORNELIUS: How are ya?

OTHERS: O.K., fine, etc.

CORNELIUS: Fixin' your nets, eh?

OTHERS. Yes.

CLYDE: Yeah, every 6,000 fish we bring 'em in for a tune-up.

CORNELIUS: Getting colder these days.

JOHN: Yup. Colder...these days.

CORNELIUS: Looks like we're due for a storm.

NATHAN: Un huh....storm comin'.

CORNELIUS: Maybe it'll pass over.

CLYDE: Cornelius, you didn't come here to talk about the weather.

CORNELIUS: Well, I just thought...I didn't want to...well, you're right. There was something on my mind.

CLYDE: Well, if it's still on your mind, I'm willing to listen.

CORNELIUS: O.K. There's some stuff that...I just can't stop thinkin' about it. Like it doesn't make sense.

CLYDE: Come clean, man. What are you talking about?

CORNELIUS: I want to hear about your beliefs. What is it that your religion is about?

NATHAN: That's a tough one.

JOHN: Where do you start?

CLYDE: Here. You know that for thousands of years our nation has been waiting around for a Messiah?

NATHAN: Hundreds of years.

CLYDE: Oh, whatever.

CORNELIUS: Yes.

DANNY: You know Isaiah said he'd be "Wonderful Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

CORNELIUS: Yea, I've heard of that.

JOHN: Well, we got one.

DANNY: We believe that Jesus is the Messiah.

NATHAN: He's the one we were waiting for.

CLYDE: Only he threw us for a loop.

JOHN: He just didn't turn out like we expected.

CORNELIUS: How was that?

CLYDE: He wasn't born in a chainmail.

CORNELIUS: Huh?

NATHAN: That means he wasn't a military type. He had a really new way of dealing with the problems of the world.

JOHN: And he didn't stockpile a lot of stuff. In fact, he didn't own a damn thing.

DANNY: He wasn't educated either. He was smart, but not schooled like the scribes. In fact, most of them couldn't stand him.

NATHAN: He sure fooled me. When he was right in our midst, I didn't recognize him as the Messiah.

CLYDE: He was a weird guy. A couple of times we almost took him back for a refund.

CORNELIUS: Well, what did the guy do that made such a difference?

NATHAN: ...He taught us...he showed us how to live. He showed us that life is better spent in caring and sacrifices for others.

JOHN: He kept babbling on about some kingdom...but the way I got it, it wasn't like any kingdom I ever heard of. (Duchess comes in and sits down and starts to listen.)

NATHAN: A kingdom run by justice, truth and love, and not by those. (He points to Cornelius' sword.)

DANNY: A kingdom where people dance the dances of joy and suffering simultaneously.

CLYDE: Where people quit fighting and get on to the important things.

CORNELIUS: Is that what was going on at your house last week? You were trying to bring this kingdom about?

DANNY: We were trying.

JOHN: We ain't been too successful yet.

NATHAN: It's like a foggy distant dream. It's awful hard to get a handle on it.

CORNELIUS: And who can share in this dream?

JOHN: It's a vision for the whole Jewish nation. We hope it will give leadership to our entire race.

CORNELIUS: How about to non-Jews? Where do they fit into this?

CLYDE: You mean like yourself? (Cornelius nods.)

NATHAN: They don't.

DANNY: How is that?

NATHAN: Jesus' kingdom was for Jews. I mean he's a Jewish man, born on Jewish soil, the Jewish Messiah, predicted by the Jewish prophet Isaiah, and as far as I can remember, Isaiah didn't say anything about saving white people.

JOHN: I mean, we didn't make the rules...we're just the guys who have to carry them out.

CLYDE: Besides that, we can't forget the politics around here. Romans have been oppressing Jews for years. They're not gonna just kiss and make up.

DUCHESS: Hold on there! (pause)...Never have I seen so much cramped thinking stuffed into one little conversation. Cornelius, will you wait here a minute ...we gotta go have a little talk. (The introduction starts.) Fellows...C'mere a minute. (They sing "Big Up Your Mind".)

BIG UP YOUR MIND

If a shoe is too small, it just won't do at all.
You can push a lot, fluff a lot,
Heave a lot, huff a lot,
Stomp, kick, smash, but you can't get it on.
And one five foot boat; you just can't make it tote
A grandmother, grandfather, parents and kids
Well, they might get in but it ain't gonna float.
It's too small
It just won't do at all
You got to take your mind out of the grind
Taste of a new, new wine, together
And when I die, it just won't do
To build that coffin three foot two
You gotta stop, Hey! Step back!
Big up your mind.

CLYDE: You lost me woman.

NATHAN: Yeah, what do shoes and boats have to do with
 religion?

DUCHESS: Look, your beliefs are too small....You remem-
 ber when people used to worship metal statues?

JOHN: Yep.

DUCHESS: Well, you're barely past that stage.

Now you ain't freed from sin; by a God that's made of tin
You pray to it, swear to it, tear out your hair to it,
Yell, shout, scream, but you can't really win
You're not free to live with a God that can't forgive,
You can try to give God his due, give it your best but you
Just can't be that superlative.
It's too small,
It just won't do at all,
You got to take your soul out of the hole,
Give a real God control, together
'Cause heaven just ain't like other joints
You can't get in on brownie points
You gotta stop, hey! Step back
Big up your mind.
And the God of all eternity don't give no love out C.O.D.
You gotta stop, hey; Step back
Big up your mind.

DANNY: I still don't see how this changes the community.

NATHAN: You can't just let anyone off the streets join up.

JOHN: If you let one white person in, you're gonna have to let all of them in.

CLYDE: Next thing you know they'll be locking us out.

DUCHESS: Oh, wise up you guys. Where'd you get your beliefs at--Abbey Rents?

Our God can't be served in a house with seats reserved
Call it a party or rendezvous, crowd or a klan, but to
Call that a church takes some kinda nerve,
If heaven is a place that's safe for just one race,
You can push and shove, crowd and cut
Tryin' to make heaven, but
This gal's goin' to the other place.
It's too small

It just won't do at all
You got to take your brain out of the drain,
Join in a new refrain together
You can't be a church that's free
With ushers checkin' out folks I.D.
You gotta stop, hey! Step back
Big up your mind.

Yes, Jesus Christ don't build no walls
The gospel's meant for one and all
You gotta stop, hey! Step back!
Big up your mind.

You just can't fan the spirit's flame,
When everyone looks and thinks the same
You gotta stop, hey! Step back!
Big up your mind.

And Jesus showed us that God's own light
Was even meant for folks that are white
You gotta stop, hey! Step back!
Big up your mind.

If your heart tells you that Christ is Lord
Then there's room for you to get on board (After a long
wait, Cornelius joins the line)

While we stop, hey! Step back!
Big up your mind.....together
Stop! Hey! Step back!

Big, big, big, big, big up your mind.

(They exit, slapping Cornelius on the back, laughing, etc.)

ACT I SCENE 6

The scene is Duchess' House. She is doing some insignificant job as Peter enters. The fish is on the table.

PETER: Duchess?

DUCHESS: Welcome, come on in, man. (They greet.) Sit down and rest awhile.

PETER: Thanks.

DUCHESS: How's Martha?

PETER: Figety, as usual. (pause) Did you tell Cornelius he could join the community?

DUCHESS: I did.

PETER: He's a gentile and a Roman soldier. That's going to cause a lot of problems.

DUCHESS: It will.

PETER: I'm not prejudiced against Romans, but I just don't know...For one thing, do you think the community will support it?

DUCHESS: Yes, I do, Peter...but there's a more important question. Do you think Jesus would have?

PETER: I don't know, I just don't know.

ANANIAS: Duchess! Hey, who's here?

DUCHESS: Come on in.

ANANIAS: (Enters, exchanges dirty looks with Peter, and walks over to Duchess.) What's this rumor about Cornelius?

DUCHESS: It's no rumor. I invited him into the community.

ANANIAS: You shouldn't have done that. He's a gentile, a Roman, and a soldier.

DUCHESS: So big deal. You want an appeal? Take it to Caiaphas.

ANANIAS: Very funny. Listen, woman, your cheap jokes can't cover up the fact that you were wrong in that --dead wrong--and we can't...

DUCHESS: Don't get so excited, you've got a weak heart, remember?

ANANIAS: I'm not getting excited. I'm just trying to point out that...well it was your mistake and that makes you the one to have to tell him.

DUCHESS: Tell him what?

ANANIAS: That he can't join the community.

DUCHESS: You pompous ass! Since when did you become the omnipotent decision maker? Do you think 5,000 denarii makes you judge, jury and executioner?

ANANIAS: Look who's talking? Where did you get the right to make decisions that change the entire community? You don't own this fish. (Picks up the metal fish.) There's some things that need to be done by the people--not by some old lady.

DUCHESS: So...we're not supposed to do what is right without first calling a meeting. If the good Samaritan did things your way that other guy would still be beside the road.

ANANIAS: Duchess, we're Jews. (pause) We are the people chosen by God for a new kind of nation. For centuries our strength has been the unity of our people. And now on some flippant whim you want to throw all that away.

DUCHESS: Take off the blindfold, man. You can't...

PETER: (Grabs the fish from Ananias.) Give me that thing. It's not for you to control.

ANANIAS: Just keep your shirt on.

PETER: You come in here shouting threats and grabbing furniture. You gotta learn something about tact.

ANANIAS: So that's the missing link. I should have known who was behind it.

PETER: What's that supposed to mean?

ANANIAS: You don't like seeing the community slipping out of your clutches so you concoct a plan to divide us up.

PETER: Are you kidding?

ANANIAS: You even conned an old woman into doing the dirty work for you.

DUCHESS: Now just a minute...

ANANIAS: It won't work, Peter.

PETER: (fuming) You--you are the filthiest scum I've ever laid eyes on. You come in here with your plans and your riches. You buy off the community with your rotten money. You would organize the people into your own personal dynasty. In the name of law and order you would turn free human beings into slaves and robots.

ANANIAS: God, look who's talking now! Mr. Do-Nothing himself. You're the biggest cop-out since Aaron built the golden calf. These are days of crisis and hardship and pain and suffering and and you exercise about as much leadership as a packrat.

PETER: Well one thing is clear. Your solutions are trash. You try to solve loneliness by putting people in boxes. You counter oppression by oppressing us.

ANANIAS: We could see Rome leveling the entire city and you'd still be preaching your sickening piety--or off somewhere fishing. You were billed as a rock, but man, you turned out to be mud.

PETER: You think you'll defeat the Romans by becoming like them. Look at yourself--you act like them, talk like them, even think like them. You may as well carry a sword.

ANANIAS: And you may as well stay in bed all day. That's the best place for you 'cause if you can't help out at least you won't be watering down our ranks by bringing in every Cornelius that comes around.

PETER: You're scared...That's it...you're scared that the people will see...you're more of a Roman than he is.

ANANIAS: You bastard.

PETER: You hypocrite!

Ananias slugs Peter. He falls backwards knocking over tables and chairs. Duchess rushes over to him.

ANANIAS: Don't waste your tears--he had it coming.

(He exits, lights out.)

--end of Act I--

ACT II SCENE 1

The scene opens with the rhythmic sounds of carpentry tools at work. Hammers, saws, hoes, hods, buckets, all are making a sound to a musical beat, which gets louder slowly, as the lights go up. The cast then sings "Big Church".

BIG CHURCH

We're building a big church;
We're building a strong church;
We're gonna put timber on timber, board upon board.
With every two by four shooting up from the floor,
We'll show the world we know the one who really is lord.

We're gonna have champagne (champagne) curtains in the
vestry,
A thick shag (thick shag) carpet in the nave.
A great big album in the narthex
With a photograph of everyone we saved.

We'll have a fourteen (fourteen) thousand dollar organ,
A stained glass (stained glass) window on each wall,
A ceiling by Michelangelo,
And a fountain by Bernini in the mall.

We'll have a radar (radar) oven in the kitchen,
A T.V. (T.V.) set in every room.
A great big alarm clock in the pulpit,
And lots of plastic flowers all in bloom.

We'll have neon (neon) candles on the altar,
Six-inch (six-inch) pads in every pew.
Ping pong tables in the basement,
And a great big bill board on the street,

With colored lightbulbs it says
Come to the house of the lord,
Come to the house of the lord.
Come to the house of the lord,
Oh, come to the house of the lord.

At the end of "Big Church" the members of the community, laughing and talking, leave. Ananias is standing at the left, and as they pass him they speak:

_____: Where would we be without you?

_____: Ananias, I bless the day God sent you to us.

_____: You know, sometimes you make me ashamed to be alive.

_____: Good job, Ananias.

_____: I want you to know that this building will go down in history as a reminder of the strength and integrity of the man that built it. I've got a movement going to name it..."First Church of Ananias the Great". (As he leaves) We'll get it approved, I know we can do it.

Ananias is alone, holding a hammer. He goes over to a board and starts to hammer a nail. His hammering becomes more and more violent until he is pounding loudly on the board. Finally, he throws the hammer down, throws the board off the sawhorse and yells...

ANANIAS: Damn! God Damn!.....What am I doing?....(getting softer) What can I do? (He sings Ananias' Lament.)

ANANIAS' LAMENT

Where am I? I've lost my way,
I've lost my friends, I've lost my faith,
I've even lost my God today.
To save myself I've thrown it all away
Don't see the key, I just can't see
Where I am.

Who am I? A bit of skin,
A bit of fat, a drop of blood,
Some muscle and some brain within.
Why can't I understand that I am just a man,
Why can't I see I'm free to be who I am.

Something's wrong here, don't belong here,
I was confident of what I could do.
But now my world is crumbling
Now, I wish I knew,

Who are you, don't know you, God,
If I could touch, if I were sure
Then I would really show you, God.
How do I see you, God
When you are off so far?
I need you so, I just don't know
Who you are.

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Lights fade, he exits.

ACT II SCENE 2

As the lights come up, Peter and Cornelius are fishing at Peter's fishing spot.

PETER: ...not much action today. Usually there's...
Hey, watch it! You've got a nibble.

CORNELIUS: (jerks his pole)...rats!...lost 'im.

PETER: You're falling asleep on the job.

CORNELIUS: I'm new at this pole fishin'. I always used
nets.

PETER: Net-fishing is for making a living; pole-
fishing is for getting your head together.

CORNELIUS: That's good. Mine could use it.

PETER: Are you still getting static from the community?

CORNELIUS: Only a few people. Most of them are really
kind to me.

PETER: I guess it's hard for all of us. I mean all
our lives we've learned to hate Romans and now...
well, "love your enemies" is a beautiful theory,
but it's hard to unlearn all that upbringing.

CORNELIUS: And I can't really blame them. The important
thing is the love and acceptance I feel from a few
key people...You know what confuses me most?

PETER: What's that?

CORNELIUS: It's Ananias. I get all these strange vibes
from him. I never know what he's thinking or how
he's feeling. And he's the one I should be closest
to--he's the only one I knew before I joined.

PETER: Ananias is a strange dude. He's got to learn
that this community is not his private toy.

Ruth and Buzzie enter on the other side of the stage. They
stumble around until they see Peter. Then they pretend to
be sober and try to walk by without being seen.

PETER: Ruth! Buzzie!

RUTH: O, hi, Peter. I din see you there, there.
Howz gengs thowin'..things goin'?

PETER: Have you been boozing again?

BUZZIE: Not really boozing. We just had a gouple of
classes...uh...grasses...But don't worry. Every-
things under matrol.

PETER: Buzzie, you told me you were gonna lay off that
stuff.

RUTH: Well we tried, only not hard enough.

BUZZIE: This Jesus guy, did he say drinking was a sin?

PETER: A sin! (He stands up) Buzzie, I couldn't care
less whether drinking is a sin or not. The problem's
not in the booze...

RUTH: Hurray! Jesus said it's okay.

PETER: No, that's not it. Jesus looked at the person,
not at the bottle; at the person, like you, Ruth.
How's your life lately? Have you been able to find
meaning and purpose and hope and joy and love?

RUTH: Well, I.....

PETER: And you, Buzzie; does this bottle really give
you what you want out of life? (Long silence.)

RUTH: Well, I always look at it this way. As the
good book says....What the hell? (They laugh and
walk off.)

CORNELIUS: That's one thing I can't understand.

PETER: What's that?

CORNELIUS: Why do you try and bring people like that into
the community?

PETER: They're not as bad as they seem.

CORNELIUS: Come on, Peter. They're drunks. They've always
been drunks and they always will be drunks.

PETER: Maybe...but which of us is good enough to cast
the first stone?

CORNELIUS: What's that supposed to mean?

PETER: Something Jesus said once. This woman was caught in adultery and the crowd wanted to stone her. He said they could do it...but someone who was without sin had to cast the first stone.

CORNELIUS: So what happened?

PETER: Would you throw a stone?

CORNELIUS: Nope.

PETER: Neither could anyone else. Then Jesus accepted her and loved her, even though she was a sinner.... That's what's behind this notion of community. I can't deny that Ruth and Buzzie are drunks. But let's not miss the fact that they're sacred in the eyes of God. And you and me, we're not good enough to do the judging. So we do our best to love and accept them--hoping they'll change.

CORNELIUS: Hey, your pole! (Peter picks it up and loses the fish.) Now who's asleep on the job? (chuckles, pauses) You know, that's really powerful. If you try to live by the law books you'll always wind up in one of two camps. Either you're a dirty bad guy who should be run out of town, or you're a saint with ulcers.

PETER: (laughs) What I got from Jesus was a third category. It's the notion that you're o.k. even if you do blow it occasionally. I guess it's even more than that. Jesus offered love and acceptance to people like Ruth and Buzzie, people that blew it their entire lives and that...that's what changed them....not some moth-eaten law book.

CORNELIUS: That's what really blows my mind. That your community---our community---could even accept me. Peter, I've come to see a lot of what was going on in my life. Everything has been military, discipline, control. In the name of glory and honor, I've been the violent oppressor, dedicating myself to piling up a good record in Rome and propping up my own ego. All at the expense of the people I was supposed to be protecting. That's why the community hit me as such a crazy, wonderful thing. I couldn't understand how they could offer that kind of acceptance to me.

PETER: I guess we all have trouble understanding. The idea is so big...to tell you the truth, I had to be convinced that bringing you in was the right thing to do. Now I know it was right...The church is not a group of righteous people basking in their holiness. It is a collection of sinners rejoicing in God's forgiveness---and together finding strength to grow in love.

CORNELIUS: Peter, I've decided to make a commitment to the group...tonight. I shall do it at the meeting tonight.

PETER: That's great, Cornelius. Great news for all of us. What commitment will you make?

CORNELIUS: Two things. First, I'm leaving the military. That kind of living---just doesn't mix with what the community offered me. You know that sword I used to carry around?

PETER: Yes.

CORNELIUS: I think I'll give it to Danny. Maybe he can make it into something. Second, you know that land that Ananias sold to me? (Gropes in a bag and pulls out the deed.) Here. I'm giving it to the church. I assume they'll want to sell it.

PETER: What you're doing will mean a lot to us. Not bad business, either. We get paid twice for the same land. (Peter begins looking over the deed.) The community should begin to grow fast now. We've got just enough to...just enough...what?

CORNELIUS: What's wrong?

PETER: There's a mistake on this deed.

CORNELIUS: Where?

PETER: It says "selling price: 10,000 denarii".

CORNELIUS: Well, that's what I paid.

PETER: Now let me get this straight. You bought the land straightaway from Ananias?

CORNELIUS: That's what I told you.

PETER: And you paid....

CORNELIUS: I paid 10,000 denarii. I personally placed
the money right in his hands. So what's the deal?

PETER: The liar. The dirty rotten liar! He told us
it was 5,000. The land--5,000 denarii.....My
God, what do we do now?

CORNELIUS: Slow down, Peter. Maybe we should think it
out....

PETER: (Gathering up tackle and poles.) Come on, man.
The community has got to deal with this one. (As
they're walking out.) The bastard!

ACT II SCENE 3

Out in front of the stage, Martha is sitting on a rock, peeling an orange. Duchess walks by. As they talk, gradually other female members of the cast walk in, sit down, and start listening.

MARTHA: Hi kid!

DUCHESS: Martha, long time no see.

MARTHA: Here, have some orange.

DUCHESS: Thanks, how's life treating you?

MARTHA: Oh, it goes up and down. Peter's all hot under the collar about something and he won't tell me what it is.

DUCHESS: Honestly, I don't know how you can stand to live with him.

MARTHA: It's tough. He's such a funny combination of a spiritual guru and bumbling idiot.

DUCHESS: He's so damn serious about everything. Drives me up the wall sometimes.

MARTHA: (pause) So tell me something--do you think women should help lead a church?

DUCHESS: Why do you ask?

MARTHA: Well, Peter says that women aren't built to handle a lot of emotional strain and therefore, for their own good, they can best serve the community by preparing meals, weaving bandages, and leading an occasional lesson for the children.

DUCHESS: He said that? (Choking on her orange.)

MARTHA: Yes.

DUCHESS: Did you hit him?

MARTHA: No. I don't know. There may be some truth in it.

DUCHESS: If the past six months is any indication of the men's ability to run a church, kiddo.....we're in big trouble!

(They sing the reprise to "Big Up Your Mind".)

REPRISE

Now a church that expects to be run by just one sex,
One day their slip will show, all of the world will know
Just what kind of God it reflects.
I can't be a sweet nice belle, in a lovely dainty shell,
While the church is run by males, trapped in their studly
jails
And both groups are as lonely as hell.
It's too small
It just won't do at all
You got to get your heads out of the beds,
Dream a new dream instead, together.
'Cause we can't let the menfolk plan
The things we should do hand in hand,
You gotta stop, hey! Step back! Big up your mind.
The sexist church is full of holes
'Cause women lose jobs and men lose their souls,
You gotta stop, hey! Step back! Big up your mind.
You're just not part of the family
If all you can say is "coffee or tea"
You gotta stop, hey! Step back! Big up your mind.
So if you see God objectively
You just might find that he's a she!
You gotta stop, hey! Step back! Big up your mind.
Together! Stop! Hey! Step back!
Big, big, big, big, big, up your mind!

ACT II SCENE 4

The scene is Ananias' study. He is sitting at a desk with a feather, writing. He finishes his letter, reads it, and begins to fold it. Peter and the community burst into the room. Peter is walking slowly and smugly, everyone else is visibly angry.

_____: There he is in all his glory.

ANANIAS: Huh?

PETER: The game's over, pal. (Fanning himself with the deed.)

ANANIAS: What's this?

_____: Don't try and talk your way out of it, you lyin' hypocrite.

_____: Just tell the truth.

_____: The truth! He wouldn't know the truth if it walked up to him and shook hands.

ANANIAS: Is this about the.....

PETER: I'll tell you what it's about. (Throws the deed on the ground.) That! That's what it's about.

_____: It's about five thousand denarii.

_____: No, it's not! It's about lying through your teeth and making fools of your friends.

PETER: It's about assuming leadership of a group based on lies and deceit.

_____: We trusted you, Ananias...and you dumped all over us.

ANANIAS: I just....all I can say is....I'm sorry.

PETER: Sorry! Do you think that's going to change things?

_____: Sorry! He makes complete fools out of people that loved and cared for him. He shoves our faces in the dirt and then he says he's sorry!

PETER: What are we going to do with you? How do you dispose of living trash?

DUCHESS: Peter, take it easy. Give him a chance.

PETER: Give him a chance! My God, woman, we gave him everything! We made a king out of him and all he did for us was spit in our faces.

ANANIAS: Well I tried to.....

PETER: You tried nothing! You played us for all we were worth.

(Ananias grabs his side and begins to stagger a little. The room is filled with shouts of agreement.)

_____ : You can't deny it. You never did anything for us.

_____ : You're the biggest liar the world has ever seen.

ANANIAS: Oh.....(the staggering is more intense)

PETER: (Not looking at him) You're a cheat! A dirty lyin' cheat! You never did anything for us and (Ananias has fallen on the floor, the others have quieted down, but Peter has not seen him.).... I curse the day I met you 'cause you've got nothing worth five seconds of my time. You're living proof that Jesus was right about rich people. There's no hope for your kind. (The community is still and silent. Someone kneels over the body and feels his pulse, then stays in that position.) 'Cause your kind is too damn interested in themselves to see anything. You're the devil himself, the source of all evil, and there's no one you're not willing to...(sees the body)...not willing to(He freezes, staring at the body.) (The person over the body says "He's dead". Pauses, then suddenly exits fast. One by one the other people leave in silence until only Peter, Duchess and the body are left.)

PETER: Don't waste your tears, he had it coming. (He exits.)

Duchess picks up the letter and begins to read. The lights fade, then go out.

ACT II SCENE 5

The scene takes place in the church. Members of the community are seated in disarray. Peter is holding a scroll and speaking to the group.

PETER: ...and so the righteous man, Job, really had to decide where his treasures were--whether in complex dealings or in God's grace. (Duchess comes in.) That, in essence was the sin of Ananias. He thought that by being correct in minor details he could con God and us into accepting him. Look at his...

DUCHESS: You're wrong, Peter.

PETER: (startled pause) Well perhaps there are some existential situations where works righteousness can co-exist with...

DUCHESS: No! You're wrong about Ananias.

PETER: I don't understand. You know what he was doing to us.

DUCHESS: You never let him talk. You never gave him a chance to...

PETER: Talk, talk, talk! That's all he ever did. He was a professional liar, Duchess. He made complete suckers out of all of us. His whole view of the world was warped. He was blind to the truth that was right in front of him.

DUCHESS: How about you, do you know the truth?

PETER: Huh?

DUCHESS: Read this. (Hands him the letter.)

PETER: What is it?

DUCHESS: He was writing this when we burst in. It's addressed to Peter and the community.

ANANIAS VOICE: (Spoken from off stage while Peter reads the letter.) I can no longer live with this burden. God calls me to face the wrongness of my ways. The land that I sold was for more than I told you. The left-over money was kept for myself. I shall no

longer be among you. I don't know where I shall be. If you will be willing, accept the rest of the money, sprinkled with my tears of sorrow. May God be with you in all that you do. May God forgive me for all that I've done. Ananias. (Long silence.)

PETER: I just didn't know...if he'd spoken up...Jesus Christ! (He exits, throwing down the scroll as he goes.)
(Silence, slowly, they all exit.)

ACT II SCENE 6

Peter is sitting alone, fishing. Cornelius enters and sits down quietly, a short distance away. After a pause he begins to speak.

CORNELIUS: It's been two weeks, Peter.

PETER: (long pause) Not many fish this year. Bad rains last winter.

CORNELIUS: We miss you.

PETER: (long pause) Been chumming with bread crumbs. Saves on worms.

CORNELIUS: Peter, when are you coming back?

PETER: I'm not coming back! Hand me that line will you?

CORNELIUS: And so...Moses and the people crossed the Red Sea and went into the wilderness. And as soon as the going got rough Moses split for the coast and went fishing.

PETER: Moses and Peter are two different dudes.

CORNELIUS: How so?

PETER: Moses didn't go around condemning and executing his friends--and misleading his people.

CORNELIUS: Come off it, Peter; Moses was no angel. He grew up in luxury living off the sweat of his people's oppression. His response to God's command was "Here am I, Lord, send someone else." He led--misled--his people in circles for 40 years. He was...

PETER: To hell with Moses. Can't you see what I'm saying? I can't do it, Cornelius, I can't go back there. I had my chance and I blew it and that's it. I was wrong and...

CORNELIUS: Yes, Peter, you were wrong! You were dead wrong! But do you think you've got a monopoly on sin?

PETER: But Ananias...

CORNELIUS: Open up your eyes, man! You're not the sole perpetrator of Ananias' death. No way, every one of us had a hand in it. Every one!

PETER: I'm the one who kept on talking. I'm the one who could have prevented it--long before.

CORNELIUS: Who do you think you are?

PETER: I could have taken leadership but I held back. We could have had a community where people shared honestly and loved totally. But I let people worship a man who was caught in a trap of deceit. I ignored the disaster I knew it would bring. We could have had a real family...but we got a rats nest.

CORNELIUS: Well what did you expect, that we'd all sprout wings and start playin' harps? What do you think the church is anyway? "The church is not a group of righteous people basking in their holiness. It is a collection of sinners rejoicing in God's forgiveness--and together finding strength to grow and love." That's a direct quote from Peter of Galilee. Listen, Hot Stuff, why don't you let God play God and you can go back to being Peter for a change. That means letting God decide who he can and cannot forgive. You're Peter, you're the foundation of the church. But if, as you say, the church is a collection of sinners, then welcome to the club. Every rock has cracks in it.

PETER: It's just that it doesn't seem like Jesus made any difference. Just when I think I've finally been justified--then I blew it.

CORNELIUS: Peter, Jesus planted a seed. He didn't do a complete rebuild. The point is that we can't expect to become perfect overnight. We don't need a premature Joan of Arc to lead us. We're called to see ourselves as we are and then, by the grace of God, to grow. (Sings Growing Song, joined gradually by the entire cast who gather around Peter and affirm him non-verbally. Finally Peter stands up and joins the group and the singing.)

GROWING SONG

CORNELIUS: We gotta keep on growin' as days go by,
We gotta keep on searching for clear blue sky,
Always new paths to follow,
Always new hills to climb.
We got bad plans to change and new dreams to
try,

THE
COMMUNITY: We gotta keep on learning from what we've done,
Each day at dawning steppin' out towards the
sun.
Now is the time: Begin
Feeling the fire and wind
Calling all God's creation to be one.

DUCHESS: I will agree, looking back, we have
Walked up some stone dead ends
We've seen pain and division combined.
But look around, feel the warmth
Know you've still got some good good friends

COMMUNITY: If you think this group is through my friend
You're blind...there's a new life to find.
So wake up, get out of bed, let's plant some
new ground.
Find some new ways to spread God's love all
around,
History's change is slow
New wind will always blow.
Take my hand, take my life, take my joy, take
my strife,
Fast or slow...it's on we grow.

PART II

BIG UP YOUR MIND

AN EVALUATION

I. ON COMMUNICATION

How does one communicate the Christian message to the world? What are the predominant ways of doing this in today's world, and what are some of the limitations of these? In this introduction let us take a glance at today's churches and examine the prevalent ways of sharing the gospel. The thesis is advanced here that there is an element necessary to the communication of the gospel which has been weakened in recent years. We can therefore look to other media for possible ways of filling the gap.

A. Preaching

Of all the methods for communication of the gospel, the greatest emphasis in the Protestant churches is placed on preaching. A sermon is usually the climax of the worship service; the axis around which it is built.

Good preaching deals well with two elements: scripture and theology. Today more and more emphasis is placed on having scriptural grounding which accurately takes into account all of the exegetical problems in the text. It is more important than ever to know some Greek and Hebrew. One must understand text criticism, form criticism, oral tradition, outside sources, and all of the methodologies that are helpful in understanding the text. One no longer stands in the pulpit and says, "God's word is this," but rather "My understanding of the exegesis of this passage is as follows." In other words, the emphasis has moved away from a literal acceptance of scripture to inter-

pretation in the light of academic scholarship.

I see this transition as a good thing. Yet as with most good things there are frustrating side effects. One of these is that preaching is losing some of its power. People have an emotional side to their beings that is less often being touched by the sermon.

B.. Theology

Theological writing has assumed greater and greater importance since biblical criticism became acceptable in religious circles. Questions have been asked, and answers have been offered regarding wider, more fundamental issues than ever before. The division between the physical sciences and religious beliefs has grown ever more fuzzy. And so Christians feel greater freedom to explore any understanding of what is meaningful in the universe--regardless of whether or not it's scripturally based.

Theology, almost by definition, is experientially based. Certainly a personal experience of some spiritual reality is a necessary starting point. Yet theology goes beyond this point. The western theologian in particular tries to apply rationality to the experiential starting point. Words are sought which attempt to logically describe the forces of the universe. The theologian tries to be true to the vast complexity of his subject by the detailed intricacy of his discussion. This is a gain for

specialists, but it becomes a barrier to consumption by the average man or woman. It seems to them to be a lot of extremely complex and irrelevant "head-tripping". It is helpful as a stimulus for thought, but only for those who are willing to do the work necessary to understand it. As a means of communicating the gospel to the world it still lacks something.

C. Evangelism

Evangelistic speakers from today's more evangelical orientations often do a more effective job of communicating. At least they reach people more on an emotional level. Yet much of this seems to be done at the expense of reason. There are certain key words that are constantly being referred to, yet seldom defined or clarified. I call these "loaded words" because they elicit negative responses in rationally oriented people, yet they are conversation requirements of many people of a more fundamentalist orientation. Loaded words, when used carelessly, are a barrier to rational communication with either group.

This dissertation project was an attempt to develop an example of a new form of communication of the good news which is free of these drawbacks. The medium of musical theater has been around for a long time. Today, however, I would suggest that it is increasing in its importance

because of its ability to fill voids that have become greater. Preaching, in moving towards a more rational approach, has seen a diminished ability to reach the non-rational side of human beings. Theology is not now, and never has been a discipline which reaches large numbers of people. Evangelism, on the other hand, often reaches people at an irrational level, while suppressing the rational thought processes.

A drama has the ability to cut through all these limitations by placing the viewer in a very human situation, allowing her/him to personally experience some of the emotions, and then, by asking the intense theological questions, it can bypass "loaded words" and get to the heart of the idea. By using the dramatic situation to ask questions rather than to give answers, it can call into action both the rational and the beyond-rational sides of our being. Using different characters, a drama can express many different feelings that portray differing personalities so that the viewer, whoever he/she is, can identify themselves in the action.

Music is the sustaining influence of a presentation. Whereas the lines and the actions are heard once, the music can be taken home and sung and played over and over. A song, to me, is 90% music and only 10% or less lyrics. The music is what reaches into the emotion as part of the listener. But as the music lingers on, the theology

implicit in the lyrics stays with it--almost as an after-thought.

Christian understandings of the world have both a rational and a beyond-rational side to them. Many attempts have gone only as far as one or the other and not even begun to synthesize the two. I submit that a musical drama has potential for sharing that deeper level of Christian understanding with a large number of people.

II. WHAT TO COMMUNICATE?

If we accept that a musical play, or any other means of communication is worth trying, it becomes necessary to ask the question "What do I want to communicate?" What is the message which we hope will penetrate both the conscious and the unconscious levels of understanding?

There is but one God and hence one creative source for all artistic outpourings. In this sense, the Christian message is one message, and all words point to the same reality. Yet this reality manifests itself in many ways and it is important for the artist to understand what aspects of truth she/he intends to stress. In this play I have tried to zero in on the experience of church--both by the people of the first century, and through the experiences of today's churches. My intentions are more specific than that. I have decided on two areas of concern, and several points within these.

A. History

To help people gain a better historical perspective with regard to the events surrounding the formation of the early church. This means demythologizing some of today's popular concepts which get in the way of hearing the good news.

In particular, there are five historical understandings I'd like to impart to the audience:

1. The Early Church and Conflict. So often today we reflect an image that the New Testament church was at complete harmony with itself and struggled only with the world. The book of Acts contributes strongly to this image. Yet Acts is not a history and it is often misunderstood in precisely this area.

A careful reading of the New Testament will reveal that there was conflict within the early church. In the musical drama I tried to illustrate two of the conflicts which are reflected in the scriptures.

First, there was conflict over the issue of circumcision. In striking contrast to the portrayal in Acts II, 1-3, Galatians 2 reflects the depth and the bitterness of the dispute.

And when they perceived the grace that was given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised; only they

would have us remember the poor, which very thing I was eager to do. But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he ate with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. And with him the rest of the Jews acted insincerely, so that even Barnabas was carried away by their insincerity. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"¹

The passage reflects several things about the issue and how it was handled by the church. First, there was no clear point at which the church's attitudes were set. Rather, it was something they struggled with over a long period of time. Decisions were made, which were not shared by all, and therefore people were inconsistent in the way they reacted to those decisions. Peter, if we are to believe Paul's account, was decidedly wishy-washy about the whole thing, being pulled in whatever direction seemed safest at the time.

Another point of conflict is over personnel and style of leadership. Apparently people were hearing different messages from different leaders and feeling the need to choose between these leaders. They were falling into the trap of following people, rather than the pull of God. This is best illustrated in 1 Corinthians 3:3-4:

¹Galatians 2:9-16.

...for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving like ordinary people?² For when one says, "I belong to Paul," and another, "I belong to Appolos," are you not merely people?³

The problem of who should lead a church, and the accompanying problem of seeing those human leaders as deities, has been with us ever since.

2. The Early Church Struggled with Property. The New Testament church was in a process of struggling with communal ownership. Personal property was a perplexing problem for them because of the gap between the values they absorbed from their society and the values lifted up by Jesus.

A quick perusal of the book of Acts tells us how important the issue of ownership became. There are five major passages which deal with the issue: Acts 2:44-46, 4:32-35, 4:36-37, 5:1-11, and 20:33-35. All of the five imply that the church was conscientiously moving from private ownership to community ownership. Two of them are very explicit about the principle. Two of them give specific examples of people selling property and giving to the community, and one of them is a single person (Paul) describing his renunciation of goods over an entire lifetime.

²Where sexist language appears in quotations, I have altered such language and placed my revision in brackets.

³1 Corinthians 3:3-4.

However, there are other passages that would suggest that the book of Acts does not advocate a single complete rejection of all personal property. Acts 12:12 portrays Peter going to the house of Mary the mother of John. The significant thing is that she had a house. Even though the verse shows that the house was in some sense a meeting place for the group, it does not dispute that it was her house.

Also, Acts 2:44-46 does not imply a complete rejection by all of all goods. The word "sold" is a translation of the Greek "εμπράδωκεν" which is in the imperfect tense. A better translation would be "used to sell", implying that it was an ongoing process for everyone, and not a one-shot deal.⁴ Most commentators suggest that "possessions and goods" referred to different things.⁵ This opens the possibility that immovable property was sold, while possessions were divided up.

Acts 4:32-35 also contains elements of confusion. Most scholars believe that verse 32 connects directly with verse 34.⁶ Haenchen sees the two verses as reflecting different emphases:

Verse 32 implies that private property as such still subsisted, for owners only gave up their

⁴Ernst Haenchen, The Acts of the Apostles, a Commentary (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), p. 192.

⁵Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, The Beginnings of Christianity (London: Macmillan, 4 vols. 1933).

⁶Haenchen, p. 232.

property-rights vis-a-vis their brethren in the faith...Luke is here suggesting that the primitive church also realized the Greek communal ideal.⁷

However, in verse 34, he suggests that everything is sold--that is, the fulfillment of an Old Testament ideal.

The writer of Luke-Acts probably placed more emphasis on renunciation of ownership than the mainstream of the church. A comparison of how he/she and others handled the same material can be made by comparing Luke with the other synoptic Gospels.

Luke's beatitudes (Luke 6:20-26) are much more specific in rejecting wealth than Matthew's (Matt 5:1-11). In Luke we find "You poor" and "You that hunger" which, in Matthew, have become "the poor in spirit" and "those who hunger and thirst for righteousness". Luke includes judgment of the rich and full which is omitted by Matthew. Similar differences can be found in a comparison of Luke 12:33-34 and Matthew 6:19-21. In my own analysis of the synoptics of Luke's 29 parables, seven tend to break down private ownership. For Matthew and Mark the score is three of 23 and one of five.

Therefore we can conclude that the writer of Luke-Acts by then is more concerned with rejection of ownership than her/his colleagues--and probably painted a picture of the New Testament church that was biased in that direction.

⁷Ibid., p. 233.

There is little disagreement, however, that the early church believed in what Conzelman calls a "general renunciation of private ownership."⁸ Therefore, the concept I wished to portray in this play is one of struggle. There were no easy answers. People probably did not sell all property all at once and depend totally on the community for the necessities of life. Yet the question of ownership was very real to them.

3. Hostility between Ethnic Groups. Another historical perspective I hope to communicate is the racial characteristics of the New Testament people. In particular, I wanted to dispel the popular notion that Jesus was a white man. Unfortunately, my research in this area ran into a snag. It turns out that ethnologically Jesus was a white man. At least the Semite people were technically members of the white race. Archibald Henry describes the Semitic Ethnic Group as follows:

The true Semite...is distinguished by ethnological features as definite as the philological features which distinguish the Semitic languages. He belongs to the white race, using the term 'race' in its broadest sense. But the division of the white race of which he is a member has characteristics of its own so marked and peculiar as to constitute a special race--or more strictly speaking a sub-race. The hair is glossy black, curly and strong, and is largely developed on the face; the nose is aquiline, the lips are thick, and the face oval. The skin is of a dull white, which tans

⁸Hans Conzelmann, The Theology of St. Luke (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), p. 36.

but does not redden under exposure to the sun. There is usually, however, a good deal of colour in the lips and cheeks. The eyes are dark like the hair.⁹

While it is thus true that Jesus' people were members of the white race, Henry describes them as ethnologically distinctive enough to be a "special race." Jews could, for the most part, be easily distinguished from non-Jews. This is particularly true of differences with the Greeks and Romans who were members of the Aryan race. Henry gives us a reference for visualizing them as follows: "In the tall, broad-shouldered Scandinavian with his flaxen hair, his light blue eyes, his long head and mealy-white skin, we may see the modern representative of the primitive Aryan."¹⁰

Hence, an important conclusion can be drawn. Although the people of the New Testament were all from the same major racial division, there were important racial differences that were readily apparent--particularly between Jews and Romans. Specifically--the Jews were a dark-skinned, dark-haired people and the Romans were light-skinned, light-haired. There is good reason to dispute the many popular portrayals of Jesus and other New Testament peoples as perfect examples of classic Aryan stock.

⁹A. H. Sayce, The Races of the Old Testament (New York: Revell, 1891), p. 77.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 158.

4. Non-Military Aspect of the Early Church. I am a pacifist. Therefore, in writing the play I have approached the military question from that point of view. However, I have tried to present an attitude which is not dogmatic. As John Ferguson says:

Dogmatic statements of the complete renunciation of war and of the complete acceptance of war by the early Church are equally easy to find in modern histories and we shall be well advised to make no sweeping statements.¹¹

For most of the members of the early church, whether or not to join the military was simply not a relevant issue. It was more a question of who would want to, even if you could. By the end of the second century, it is apparent that there were many Christians among the ranks of the military, indicating, not that the Christians were joining up, but rather that the faith was spreading among the soldiers.¹² Responses to this by the church were mixed, some defending a Christian's right to become a soldier, and some advocating a pacifist point of view.

In dealing with the issue in the play, I have tried to be consistent with these considerations. I have operated on the notion that most people didn't even deal with the issue, yet some did change their lifestyles away from militarism because of the influence of Jesus.

¹¹John Ferguson, The Enthronement of Love (London: Fellowship of Reconciliation, 1950), p. 37.

¹²Ibid..

5. Ananias' Story. Because of the plot decided on in this play, special consideration must be given to the Ananias story of Acts:

But a man named Ananias with his wife Sapphira sold a piece of property, and with his wife's knowledge he kept back some of the proceeds and brought only a part and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? How is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and died. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him.

After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter said to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much." And she said, "Yes, for so much." But Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Hark, the feel of those that buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." Immediately she fell down at his feet and died. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard of these things.¹³

Most scholars agree that the property mentioned (from the Greek 'κτήμα ') was a parcel of land.¹⁴ The translation "kept back" comes from 'εὑοσφισαγα ', meaning "Kept part of that which was consecrated", at least in its use in Joshua 7:1.¹⁵

¹³Acts 5:1-11.

¹⁴Haenchen, p. 237.

¹⁵Jackson and Lake, p. 50.

It should be noticed that Peter did not use "recommended procedure" in dealing with the situation. Matthew 18:15 certainly would direct him to respond differently. Many writers point out the obvious tactical problem in the narrative, particularly in regard to the burials and the timing. It is for these reasons that most commentators consider it legendary. Wilfred Knox says:

now we may suspect that the process of legendary accretion, inevitable in an age which expects miraculous cures and regards them as a vindication of theological truth, has already been at work on the stories of Acts. It would be rather strange if it were not so.¹⁶

Given the legendary nature of the story, there are varying theories as to its purpose. Menoud takes it to be an explanation of the first Christian's death.¹⁷ Schmitt calls it a "cautionary tale told to the newly baptized for catechetical purposes, to make it clear that God watched over the purity of the community and exacts vengeance for its violation."¹⁸ Schmitt says it might have been based on an incident that really occurred.¹⁹ Trocme thinks it might have happened, with the sacrifice of wealth being a way to "buy" their way into the community.²⁰

Haenchen asserts that

...the story is only comprehensible if Ananias and Sapphira wanted to enjoy the glory of exceptional generosity without making the corres-

¹⁶Wilfred Knox, The Acts of the Apostles (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), p. 65.

¹⁷Haenchen, p. 240. ¹⁸Ibid. ¹⁹Ibid. ²⁰Ibid.

ponding sacrifice....But there were not 120 wealthy members in the Jerusalem congregation, and of the few who did have property only a handful sold their 'κτῆμα' and donated the proceeds to the community--at all events, Barnabas and Ananias were the only names handed down.²¹

In writing the musical play, I have used as a starting point the assumption that the story is legendary, though perhaps based on a real incident. While adding a lot of imaginary happenings for the purpose of the drama, I have tried to put forward the two events which, if the story is based on a real incident, are most likely to be true: first, that Ananias sold some land and kept part of the money for himself, and secondly, that Ananias was confronted by Peter and subsequently died.

So much for the historical aspect of the play--there is one more area of ideas that I would like to communicate to the audience, and several more specific parts of that.

B. Theology

The second purpose is to help people better understand on both a rational and beyond-rational level, theological issues implicit in the whole idea of having a Christian church. In particular, five areas of theological thinking are lifted up.

²¹Ibid., pp. 240-241.

1. The Church Is a Collection of Sinners. Often we have fallen into the trap of dividing the world up into good people and bad people. Much 18th and 19th century theology had the effect of opening us up to that. The doctrine of predestination implies simply that some people make it and some do not. You either go the garden or the pit--and there's no in-between. Even today we find similar divisions of people. The question "Are you a Christian?" implies that there are only two choices--yes and no.

The theology I have lifted up in this play is similar to one of the basic tenets of Alcoholics Anonymous. The first step on the road to regaining control of one's life is to say "I am an alcoholic." It is this affirmation which makes healing possible--yet no matter long a person stays in the organization, he/she never stops making the affirmation. The same theological idea should apply to the church. The first step towards healing is the affirmation "I am a sinner." Only then can there be growth, joy, and learning. As soon as we stop making the statement--the growth slows to a standstill. When a person starts seeing others as either good people or bad people--the potential for growth of her/himself is diminished, and the others are put into a trap as well.

Peter was no saint. One of the messages of the play was that at several times he was just plain wrong. Ananias is remembered today in crossword puzzle circles as being

synonymous with "liar". Yet I have portrayed him as being equally human. Even the gathered community is not infallible. At times they act jointly in ways directly contrary to the teachings of Jesus.

2. All People Are Sacred in the Eyes of God. One of the most significant things about Jesus was the crowd he used to associate with. Some of them were people considered to be outcasts from the community. Tax collectors, prostitutes, even Romans were people he dealt with and loved. This suggests that one of the hallmarks of his beliefs was that each person contains a kernel of the sacred.

Unfortunately, the early church, like the church today, found it hard to absorb the message. The dispute over circumcision is a case in point. People were unwilling to forgive others for what they supposed was their sin. The message of Jesus to forgive unceasingly got lost in the scuffle.

One of the basic assumptions of the play is that all people are sacred. The incarnation did not take place at just one time and place. Rather it takes place in everyone. All are infinitely sacred in the eyes of God. All are worthy of forgiveness.

There is another way that this idea needs to be lifted up. It is in forgiving oneself. Some people refuse to forgive themselves and thus allow God's forgiveness to

be received. People miss their own sacredness in the eyes of God.

3. Salvation Is a Continuous Process. One of the corollaries to the theory that one is either saved or not saved is that salvation occurs at one very identifiable time in one's life. Many of today's fundamentalist Christians can quote the exact day, place, hour and minute that salvation for them occurred. The implications of this are that we might as well stop trying. God has made his choice --who are we to disagree?

One of the theological blocks on which the play was built is a rejection of this concept of salvation. Grace is a constant force operating in the universe, pulling with continuous strength at all parts of the world towards the finding of some kind of unity or oneness with God and with each other; with the world. Salvation occurs gradually, yet unceasingly as a response to this force.

Often, in hearing what is said in today's churches, I get a picture of the resurrection as being the event that once and for all sets people on the right track. Christ's sacrifice and victory established a small pearl in a sea of slime, and though it was hard being persecuted by the cruel world--at least among themselves they had found salvation.

My own view is that the people in the early church were also in a process of growth. There remained jealousy and loneliness, "ego-tripping" and manipulation. What

Jesus did was to help define the direction of growth as well as the power in the universe that calls us in that direction.

4. Church-type Versus Sect-type Church. Langdon Gilkey has written a book entitled How the Church Can Minister to the World without Losing Itself in the World. Building on Troeltsch's classic distinction, he looks at two historical types of churches and how mainstream Protestantism in the United States is a product of both of these. He describes the "church-type" church as follows:

Here the church possesses a vast, unified, and universal organizational structure which is intimately related to the political power of its society and so becomes "established" as the supreme spiritual force in the community. It thus governs the spiritual life of all people in society, with the intent of bringing them all, high or low, rich or poor, respected or outcast, virtuous or criminal, within reach of its truth, grace, and salvation.²²

This is in contrast to the "sect-type" church:

The sect-type, therefore, emphasized individual, personal experience in religion: no /person/ is a Christian unless he has himself experienced redemption through the work of the Holy Spirit, and unless he now exhibits this work in a transformed life. This new life in the Spirit, above all, is what makes a /person/ a Christian --not any priest's pronouncement over a baby or the /layperson's/ nominal obedience to doctrine. Thus the work of the Holy Spirit, rather than a creed or the sacramental authority of clergy, creates the church, empowers it, and brings in new members through adult conversion. In such

²²Langdon, Gilkey, How the Church Can Minister to the World without Losing Itself (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 4.

a group all members are laypersons, for no person can by outward office be closer to this inward work of the Spirit than any other.²³

Gilkey goes on to describe the synthesis of these into today's Protestant denominations. For the greater part of the play, however, I have left these two points of view separate--so that they may be more clearly understood by the audience.

5. Overspill of a Sexist Society. Another idea that I wanted to communicate in the play is the neutrality of Christianity with respect to sex. People of both sexes are equally capable of preaching, praying, counseling and all other leadership roles within the community. Unfortunately, the early church, like our own, did grow out of a sexist society and these same attitudes had their effect. These turned out to be equally oppressive of males and females, limiting both in their freedom to be authentic Christians.

Christ's style of dealing with the world pulls strongly in the other direction. It affirms that human beings are first people, and then they are women and men. Therefore in the musical, I hoped to portray that our churches, past and present, still reflect the sexist assumptions of the society in which they are found, yet the spirit calls us in a new direction.

²³Ibid., p. 9.

III. THE PLAY

Given what it is that I wanted to communicate, the work begins. How does one construct a musical drama that will fulfill these expectations? During this section I'm going to re-list the expectations and relate the way I tried to deal with them. I am presupposing that the reader of this accompanying paper has read the play. Therefore many of the goals will be obvious in the ways they are found in the play so it will be only necessary to point out a few details.

A. History

1. The Early Church Experienced Conflict. Certainly this theme runs the entire length of the play. From the opening words the conflict among members is readily apparent:

Danny: Watch it, Ananias, you're supposed to take it easy. 'Member?

Ananias: Hey! Give me a break--I'm not a complete invalid.

The conflict ranged from the minor irritations of being together:

Duchess: There you go, shooting off your fat mouth again.

conflict over decision-making:

Ananias: Look who's talking! Where did you get the right to make decisions that change the entire community? You don't own this fish. There's some things that need to be done by

the people--not by some old lady.

Duchess: So...we're not supposed to do what is right without first calling a meeting. If the good Samaritan did things your way that other guy would still be beside the road.
(p.36)

conflict over what they were trying to do:

Clyde: But what the hell are we?...We're just a bunch of people that had one freaky friend in common. (p.6)

The biggest single area of conflict is the issue of circumcision. This conflict is the basis for the start of the fight at the end of Act I:

Ananias: Duchess, we're Jews. We are the people chosen by God for a new kind of nation. For centuries our strength has been the unity of our people. And now on some flip-pant whim you want to throw all that away.
(p. 36)

Note that Duchess' decision to bring Cornelius into the community does not solve the issue. Rather there is a long period of wrestling before the people begin to accept him.

Peter: Are you still getting static from the community?

Cornelius: Only a few people. Most of them are really kind to me.

Peter: I guess it's hard for all of us. I mean all our lives we've learned to hate Romans and now...well, "love your enemies" is a beautiful theory, but it's hard to unlearn all that upbringing. (p. 42)

The other major conflict in the play is the nature of leadership of a church. Ananias is a highly organized

person who is used to effectively managing groups of people. Peter is much more tuned into people's personal needs, and very slow to take strong leadership. Peter is set against any church hierarchy.

These two themes are spelled out from page 18 and continuing through page 19 with the two long statements by Peter and Ananias being the keys.

The explosion in the final scene of Act I points up the fallacies of these differing styles of leadership. Ananias is accused of turning into a Roman (Peter: "You may as well carry a sword"), while Peter is accused of taking no leadership at all (Ananias: "And you may as well stay in bed all day.") (p. 37) By the end of the play, Peter is leaning towards taking the best from both points of view.

2. The Early Church Struggled with Property. This, too, is implicit in the basic idea of the whole play. It should be emphasized, however, that no one set solution was portrayed. Not everyone chose to sell something and no one chose to sell everything. Instead, through their experiments, a direction was apparent. Pages 20 and 21 is the place in the play where the community really deals with the issue. No sooner have they stated that giving is power, then they begin to make a god out of Ananias for giving so much to them.

Another way they struggled with the problem of property is in the conflict over building a building. Peter is against it from the beginning. The rest of the community fell right into the trap of a building-oriented church. The author used some artistic license here, for church buildings were not built until much later. The fullest limits of this trap are explored in the song "Big Church". (p. 39)

3. Hostility between Ethnic Groups. This is portrayed mainly in terms of the conflict between the Jews and the Romans. Instead of centering this division constantly on the issue of circumcision, I chose to portray it at times in terms of a struggle which is going on in today's churches--racism. Many of the lines intentionally pointed to racism--only this time it was portrayed in reverse.

John: If you let one white person in, you're gonna have to let all of them in.

Clyde: Next thing you know they'll be locking us out. (p. 34)

Certain twentieth century words are used here to drive the point home:

John: Speaking of Romans, what do you think of that Cornelius dude?

Danny: Not bad for a gringo. (p. 29)

4. Non-military Groups of the Early Church. The chief place where this is dealt with is largely in connection with the decisions made by Cornelius as a commitment

to the community (p. 45). Cornelius decides to withdraw from the military as part of that commitment. However, the issue is touched on in many ways. In Scene I, 5, they are describing Jesus:

Clyde: He wasn't born in a chainmail.

Cornelius: Huh?

Nathan: That means he wasn't a military type. He had a really new way of dealing with the problems of the world. (p. 31)

describing the Kingdom of God:

Nathan: A kingdom run by justice, truth, and love and not by those. (He points to Cornelius' sword.) (p. 31)

or during the dispute about bringing Cornelius in:

Ananias: He's a gentile, a Roman, and a soldier. (p. 35)

During Scene II, 2 Cornelius makes a confession that his military career was pursuing the wrong set of values:

Cornelius: Peter, I've come to see a lot of what was going on in my life. Everything has been military, discipline, control. In the name of glory and honor, I've been the violent oppressor, dedicating myself to piling up a good record in Rome and propping up my own ego. All at the expense of the people I was supposed to be protecting.....

5. Ananias' Story. The greatest departure from given historical facts lies in the character of Ananias. The two things which I have supposed are historical have remained in tact, namely, that he sold some land, held back

the proceeds, and that he died while being confronted by Peter. Beyond that, everything in the play is imaginary.

Ananias has many admirable qualities. It is he who has the skills to get the church started. He was the one to see a side of the vision of Jesus' kingdom that no one else saw. Yet, like Caesar, Ananias had trouble separating his love from his ambitions. He is a very human person who gets pushed into the role of false hero, especially in the song "I Wish That I Could Be Like Ananias" (p. 43). This is partly what he wants--yet partially it turns into a trap separating him from those he loves and from God. (Ananias' Lament, p. 40.)

Peter rapidly sees through Ananias' facade, yet is too threatened by him to be able to love him. Ananias' game seems to Peter to be working--at least he gets considerable glory from it. Therefore, for the bulk of the play, Peter is waiting for revenge, for the day when he can finally "get the goods" on Ananias.

B. Theology

Moving to the second group of issues, discussed earlier in this chapter, the play also deals with three important theological issues in the early church.

1. The Church Is a Collection of Sinners. This is embodied throughout the play. Peter describes it in the

line which is quoted back to him at the end:

Peter: The church is not a group of righteous people basking in their holiness. It is a collection of sinners rejoicing in God's forgiveness--and together finding strength to grow in love. (p. 45)

By the end of the play no character is free from guilt about Ananias' death. All participated in making a false saint out of him. And all helped condemn him when they found out he was human.

The question of forgiving oneself comes into play here. Both Ananias and Peter, when confronted with their own sins, are unwilling to let God or the community have a chance to forgive them.

Cornelius: (to Peter) Listen, Hot Stuff, why don't you let God play God and you can go back to being Peter for a change. That means letting God decide who he can and cannot forgive. You're Peter, you're the foundation of the church. But if, as you say, the church is a collection of sinners, then welcome to the club. (p. 54)

2. All Persons Are Sacred in the Eyes of God.

Clyde, when confronted with Jesus' sacrifice, responds "Well this man (meaning himself) ain't Jesus." A member of the community responds, "I don't know, Clyde. Maybe you are." (p. 20)

The idea behind this is that while everyone is a sinner, everyone also embodies part of the holy. Clyde and every member of the community really were Jesus--or at least Christ.

The idea that there is no one who is not sacred in the eyes of God is also dealt with by Peter in terms of Ruth and Buzzie:

Cornelius: Come on, Peter. They're drunks.
They've always been drunks and they always will be drunks.

Peter: (later) I can't deny that Ruth and Buzzie are drunks. But let's not miss the fact that they're sacred in the eyes of God. And you and me, we're not good enough to do the judging. So we do our best to love and accept them--hoping they'll change. (p.44)

3. Salvation Is a Continuous Process. In Scene I, 5 (p. 32) Cornelius asks Duchess' boys about the kingdom of God.

Cornelius: Is that what was going on at your house last week? You were trying to bring this kingdom about?

Danny: We were trying.

John: We ain't been too successful yet.

Nathan: It's like a foggy distant dream. It's awful hard to get a handle on it.

This idea runs throughout the play. Whatever it is that they are striving for...it doesn't come right away. In fact it never finds completion.

This notion is best stated in the music. "The Growin' Song" carries the theme. Note that the middle interlude differs between the version at the beginning (p. 4) and the one at the end (p. 55). The first stresses "Sure we came a ways, but we still need to grow". The other says

"Sure we've made some mistakes but we're still moving towards that vision."

Another song that lifts up this theme is the "Communion Song." It says that we are simultaneously broken and whole (p. 17) and we never get rid of either characteristic. Hence, salvation is for us a continuous process.

4. Church-type versus Sect-type Church. In the early part of the play these varying emphases of churches are represented in the attitudes of the characters of Ananias and Peter. Ananias' vision of the church is that of a hierarchical, centralized church, with well-designated administrative leaders. He is quick to jump to the concept of a building-oriented community. He makes decisions on his own, with confidence. (Ananias: "We need a treasurer here...How about Ellen." p. 21)

Peter, on the other hand, visualizes the sect type church. The basis of the power is at the local church level, decisions need to be democratic, a building is not a necessity for the community. Peter, however, is in some ways like many a local pastor. He is much more of a theologian than an administrator. He has a tendency to say things which, while they may have wisdom and depth to them, aren't likely to get much done. But to Peter, that's acceptable. He is in no hurry.

Note the contrast in the way the two respond to Duchess' letting Cornelius into the community:

Peter: Do you think the community will support it?

Ananias: (later) You shouldn't have done that.
(p. 35)

Peter vacillates about the whole issue and sees it in terms of the problems it's likely to cause. Ananias sees it as an open and shut case. Duchess has simply broken the rules and therefore her decision is invalid.

5. Overspill of a Sexist Society. The main way that this is dealt with is in Scene 3 of Act II. The scene tries to express how the division of labor is creating strains on both sexes. Much growth is needed in the church in this regard, both then and now. But the direction of Christ's message is clearly stated by the women of the community. (p. 48)

IV. OVERALL EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

A. Audience Reaction

It is extremely difficult to determine a way to measure the effectiveness of a project of this type. I haven't had a chance to get a fair sampling of audience response. Most of the people who approached me had something specific they wanted to say. And most of these cases reflected the fact that the play had said something to them

or that they wanted to take issue with something. However, there is another reason why the effect on the audience is so difficult to evaluate. The goal of the project was to try to reach them at a beyond-rational level. Therefore that which they can verbalize is insufficient to express what really happened to them. The non-rational experience is what the community was talking about in Scene I, 3, "It does most of its work invisibly."

Given these limitations, I shall try to describe some of the audience reactions as I perceived them.

1. They Were Entertained. They stayed to watch the whole thing, and although everybody in the play didn't live happily ever after, there was an element of grace to be found in it.

2. They Did Hear the Theology. I received many positive comments from people who were theologically oriented. Several people expressed the idea that they were caught in the trap of really liking the plays "Godspell" and "Jesus Christ Superstar", but disagreed strongly with the theology. One minister said it was a great statement of "good old Liberal theology." I also felt that the theology was heard by those not so well read in the subject. Some people said they really identified with Ruth and Buzzie and felt a sense of release in the way they were dealt with.

3. The Basic Plot Was Communicated. People understood the historical ideas that I was trying to show. Many of the subtlties were picked up, such as the reverse racism. People were excited by the notion that Peter was very human --even after the resurrection. Much of that which was relevant to today's churches was picked up, ranging from obvious things like "Big Church," to more subtle things, like "Since it was your idea--do you want to organize it?" (p.14)

4. The Music Seemed To Be Successful from Two Points of View. First, it permitted the audience to be a bit more involved in what was going on on stage. At least there were toes tapping and fingers snapping. One person said it was really difficult to keep from getting up and dancing. Secondly, the music is where the theology and other memories of the play are taken home. Since the performance of Big Up Your Mind, I have had so many requests for copies of the music, I can't get enough in stock. When a person goes home and sings a song, they are repeating the words to that song, and therefore, reinforcing the message of those words.

The most important kind of success, however, was not that which occurred in the audience, but rather the spirit that was developed among the cast and organizers during the planning. All of the ideas that I listed as to be imparted to the audience, were things that we had to

work with as a cast. During the rehearsal times we really experienced the brokenness, as well as the oneness. We had to affirm that each person was both sinner and sacred, and then find ways of organizing around these ideas, with such mundane things as "How you get on someone's case for being late for rehearsal, and still affirm that they are sacred people in the eyes of God?"

The biggest reason why the musical was such a success at the box office was that the cast had to work so hard on community behind the scenes. The action on stage was very real for us, for we had been through it all off stage. One of the most often heard comments was that people really experienced the community of the people on stage and that, more than anything else, communicated what we were trying to say.

B. Drawbacks

Any evaluation needs to recognize also certain drawbacks as limitations of such a project.

1. Resources Used. To put on a play of this magnitude requires a tremendous amount of resources of several types. The first is time. The greatest amount of time went into the writing of the play. Countless hours went into the writing of the music, play, and orchestration, not counting any rehearsal and organization time. For me the

time was well spent. There was much satisfaction in it.

When the La Mesa United Methodist Church started work on the play, it required another massive commitment in time. The number of problems to be solved seemed insurmountable. But as the play progressed, the commitment of the cast and non-cast during rehearsal and otherwise increased. Whatever needed to be done--there were people to do it. During the last month of rehearsal the play was the focal point of the activities of the church.

As one might expect, this did put considerable strain on the church. People who weren't involved felt left out. We had to be very careful to minister to them in all the normal ways, as well as communicate to them that it's o.k. not to be a part of the play.

The other resource taken by the play is money. The costs of the original production were about \$1000 and although we cleared about \$400 over this, that still represents a sizable risk. Costs of taking it on the road will be even greater.

2. Limits of the Medium. In a play you get only one shot at the audience. Experts in education tell us that on a rational level one shot gives you a very poor chance for successful communication. To get a message through one must tell it again and again. The Sunday sermon has a decided advantage in this respect, for the

preacher can keep stressing an important point from week to week. One of the messages of the play is that the gospel is the easiest thing in the world to stray away from. It requires constant nurturing and re-thinking.

I have already discussed how the play can partially overcome this by reaching out to the beyond-rational level of the listener. However there is one barrier to this which is not a problem for a preacher. That barrier is a lack of an on-going personal relationship with the people doing the listening. A message can be more readily digested if the listener knows and trusts the person who brings it. Complete strangers are at an immediate disadvantage--both on a stage and in a pulpit. They are unaware of the background of their listeners. Moreover, the play form allows for no cycle of feedback. What will happen has been preplanned and well rehearsed. There will be little adjusting for the particular situation.

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